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General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

49th plenary meeting
Thursday, 30 October 2003, at 6 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 6.25 p.m.

Agenda item 104

Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development:

(b) High-level dialogue for the implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/58/216 and A/58/323)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/58/436)

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/3, Parts I-II)

Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/77 and Add. 1 and 2)

Conference Room Paper (A/58/CRP.2)

The President: The following represents my assessment of the interactive dialogue in the General Assembly on financing for development.

Governments, international institutions and non-Government stakeholders who participated in our dialogue have clearly signalled their continued strong support for the unique Monterrey process. This is critical for full implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. Speakers were frank in their assessment of implementation, and progress — when it had occurred — was welcomed.

But much more is required, and there has been slippage in some areas, notably in disappointing developments in international trade and financial transfers. There were many calls for a more precise mechanism for monitoring, as we go forward, the Monterrey commitments and the targets embodied in Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals.

Both developed and developing countries should report on actions being taken to implement the Monterrey Consensus. The essential issue in delivering the Monterrey Consensus is political will, and many speakers called for the need to explore ways to muster the required political will. Certain developed countries described an approach that explicitly seeks greater coherence among Government policies and that, in so doing, would raise the visibility of the commitment to development. In this approach, legislation would require that decisions taken in different policy areas should be explicitly found consistent with development commitments.

We also learned that parliamentarians in developing countries are becoming more intimately involved in development and economic reform issues and that international support is engaged in indirect discussions with international financial institutions and bilateral donors on proposed programmes. This is a practical means for promoting "ownership" of reforms.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Many called for an increase in core resources for United Nations development assistance. There was a universal concern that the international trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) should resume as soon as possible and work expeditiously towards an effective development conclusion.

Some Governments expressed concern about the abuse of anti-dumping measures exemplifying a concern about how the WTO was functioning. A number of speakers emphasized the important role that regional cooperation can play in trade and financial issues and that it should be promoted further.

Concerns were expressed about international commodity markets, the exposure of developing countries' farmers to market vulnerability and to volatile and low prices, and the need to consider this matter at the United Nations in a more comprehensive and focused manner. One proposal was to adjust development assistance to counter the declines in cycles of commodity prices. Another idea was to consider some mechanism for commodity price guarantees for poor countries. Some delegations called for a more meaningful institutional relationship between the United Nations and the WTO. This was suggested by civil society.

While increases in aid were reported and commitments to further increased official development assistance were reiterated, the large gap between expected flows and what is needed to realize the Millennium Development Goals remained very large. No one questioned that this was so or gave us the answer as to how to close the gap.

The importance of increasing aid to support rural development and agriculture in developing countries was emphasized. The need of this sector was the focus of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council last summer. Speakers expressed disappointment at how slow the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative has been to deliver relief, and questions about the adequacy of the relief were raised. A number of creditor countries said they were willing to revisit the issue of topping-up, which is a mechanism to deepen debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries when they complete their programme and still do not have — or would not have had — sufficient relief.

More generally, there seems to be considerable interest in undertaking further international work on how to resolve sovereign debt crises and how to be more successful in preventing them. It was felt by many that the United Nations could help facilitate such considerations, such as through the Secretary-General's proposed informal study group or an independent international arbitration group under the auspices of the United Nations. While there are common financing needs for development, differentiated support is needed for emerging countries, middle-income countries, least developed countries and land-locked and small island developing States. Some speakers focused attention on remittances as a major source of financial flows from developed to developing countries. There were some efforts to make such transfers less costly and simpler. There is a need to strengthen international cooperation on tax matters, and there was strong interest in pursuing the Secretary-General's proposal to upgrade the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Cooperation in Tax Matters. An enhanced dialogue on tax issues should be global and include the full representation of small States.

There were strong calls for additional, new and innovative sources of financing for development. Many speakers reiterated the need to establish and consolidate democratic structures at the domestic level for better governance, including through improved transparency, anti-corruption regulations and measures to combat money-laundering. There is equal concern to strengthen democratic processes at the global level, in particular to enhance the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in international financial institutions, and in more settled and standard ways. The United Nations, through the Economic and Social Council, could play a larger role as a forum for discussion on macroeconomic policy coordination at the global level.

Several countries were concerned about reforming the Economic and Social Council in order to make it more effective in international economic and social affairs and, in particular, to maintain the momentum of the financing for development process. One specific proposal was to expand the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council. Another proposal was to create an Economic and Social Security Council. Yet another was for the formation of an intergovernmental body to adequately prepare for the Monterrey follow-up meeting.

In addition, there were proposals to form, under the financing for development umbrella, various informal, multistakeholder working groups to address various technical policy issues, such as financial sector development, financial cooperation, tax matters and debt arbitration. A number of speakers from developing countries described efforts in the area of South-South financial cooperation. That included assistance to least developed regional partners and South-South debt relief.

We have had two full days of holistic interactive dialogue on financing for development. We have reviewed all chapters of the Monterrey Consensus, and we have heard from practically all stakeholders. I want to personally thank all of you for participating, and, in particular, the Secretariat for their usual tremendous support.

I have shared with you highlights of our dialogue and will submit a more comprehensive summary to the Second Committee, as mandated. Let us leave here committed to act and implement what we have articulated in words over the last couple of days. It is with pleasure — and I am sure with great relief to some of you — that I declare the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development to be closed.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.